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24 February 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Comments on Sam Adams' Paper, Viet Cong Subversion and the Coming Offensive, 15 February 1972

1. Usually when Sam Adams puts pen to paper on the subject of Vietnamese Communist subversion, the effort includes some useful insights based on a reexamination of information if not new or overlooked information. This is the case, even if all of his general conclusions are not agreed with.

2. I find few such redeeming features in this paper. It lacks balance concerning the context in which subversion takes place and fails to properly assess many of the important aspects of subversion. Moreover, the estimate that military proselyting has been on the upswing is poorly argued, and the paper has the air of a petulant tract with the result that arguments become overdrawn and logic unlikely.

3. Sam appears to believe that there is a strong likelihood that the South Vietnamese government and its armed forces are going to fold this dry season under the twin measures of the NVA and internal subversion. His position is poorly supported by fact and logic, and we cannot take him on faith because of his record as a prognosticator. The same gloomy picture has been offered up three years running. That he wants us to understand this critical danger which he apparently believes we do not may be in part the cause of the urgent style and distorted presentation.

4. Sam notes that two recent CIA papers, Enemy Strategy and Capabilities Through May 1972 and OCI's The Communist Winter-Spring Offensive in South Vietnam, did not deal with subversion. The analytical task in the first of these was laid out by Dr. Kissinger and dealt almost exclusively with the main forces of both sides. However, even here the general security situation and the less than ideal fighting capabilities of ARVN were implicit constants in the analysis. In my judgment, the OCI paper dealt adequately with security and morale problems, even though it did not address subversion per se.

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5. More importantly, to select two papers from the vast flow of DDI production on the war to show that we "have tended to neglect Viet Cong subversion" is not a balanced view. In my judgment, VC subversion is being adequately considered by our analysts. The recent OER Guerrilla paper went to some lengths to describe and evaluate the "secret guerrillas." OCI discussions of security in various areas of South Vietnam and the ability of the VC to influence events in GVN territory include subversion directly and implicitly.

6. The implication of the position of the paper dealing with the emphasis on and scope of military proselyting clearly states that it is stronger now than in 1969. It also implies that the campaign begun then to increase the military proselyting potential and legalization in general has been a success. I don't believe Hanoi would agree. There may very well be more VC contacts in the million plus PSDF which didn't even exist before Tet 1968. (There should be, since a large share of its members are ex-VC or people formerly controlled by the VC.) However, it is clear that there is less VC influence in the vast bulk of Regular, RF, and PF units up and down the country.

7. Sam points out cogently the worst soft spots in the northern coastal provinces. His contribution is to note that the military proselytors along with other VC assets are at work there.

8. Paragraph 11 starts out with the statement that it is hard to document how well the VC proselytors have done among South Vietnamese army regular units. The paragraph ends with statistics on the decline in present-for-duty strength of ARVN maneuver battalions during 1971. Clearly, most numbers of South Vietnamese are influenced by the VC in one way or another, and this, along with many other factors, influences the number of people coming into ARVN and the numbers deserting. However, to ascribe the particular trend during 1971 to an increase in the effectiveness of the VC is not supported by any evidence or logic.

9. It is a pity this paper isn't more useful. The subject is important.

OER/D/I/SV

Chief, South Vietnam Branch

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